DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 268 755 EC 182 359

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TITLE Educational Internship Program.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (64th, New Orleans, LA, March 31-April 4, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Education; Computers; *Internship Programs; *Language Handicaps; *Physical Disabilities; *School Business Relationship; Secondary Education; *Speech Therapy; *Work Experience Programs

ABSTRACT

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EDUCATIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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A unique program established a partnership between a speech and language pathologist and a local industry. The pathologist spent six summer weeks working in the Human Resources Department. Reasons for participating in the program were to obtain a knowledge of the pragmatic language skills needed to prepare students for gainful employment and to learn what type of modifications are needed for physically handicapped students so that they can use a computer at a job setting. During the school year, business experts came to school to teach interview techniques and discuss career opportunities.

EC 183359

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Paper presented at the Annual Convention

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Council for Exceptional Children

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Welcome, I am Lucille Kantor and I have been employed as a speech and language pathologist at a special education center of a public school system in Reading, Pennsylvania for the past seventeen years. Last summer Mary Schaeffer, a teacher of a secondary physically handicapped class at the same center, and I participated in an innovative Education Internship Program. Today we are pleased to share with you our experiences. We will show you how you can start a similar program in your school district. I will be discussing how to commence an education internship and what the teachers and industries' personnel accomplished. A slide presentation will follow. Mary will relate how the impact of the experience is related to the classroom.

The program enabled science, math and computer literacy teachers of grades 7 through 12 an opportunity to work in a local industry for six weeks in the summer. It was based on the need for teachers to acquire current information regarding advanced technologies, new occupational information, and a clear understanding of the world of work. As a direct result of the program, teachers developed effective and creative teaching strategies for classroom use. A one-day-a-week seminar was held at different company sites, providing the participant with information about five other companies in addition to the one sponsoring his or her internship. The idea for the program came from a National Career Education conference in 1983 in Louisville, Kentucky, of businessmen and educators who realized the need for a strong and effective cooperative partnership. It received strong support from the Community Career Education Advisory Committee (23 representatives of industry and school guidance counselors) and the Career Education Consortium (19 members with representative from each school district in the county). A steering committee was formed from volunteers of these two groups. This educator internship committee consists of 7 members.

Their first task was to obtain funding. They applied for, and were granted, a Ben Franklin Partnership Grant. Under this program, private funds were matched on a two-to-one basis. Private funding was provided by American Bank and Trust Company, Bank of Pennsylvania, Carpenter Technology Corporation, General Battery, Gilbert Associates Inc., (an engineering firm) and Berks County Intermediate Unit (representing all school districts in the county).

The second task was to find businesses that would accept interns. Endorsements were given by the local Chamber of Commerce, Private Industry Council, and the Interinstitutional Cooperation Forum. One thousand brochures were printed explaining the program and letters sent to each local company sizable enough to utilize an intern. Participating companies chose to have the intern work on a particular project or to have the individual rotate through several departments. The letter was sent to personnel directors, training directors and the chief officer. A follow up phone call the following week discussed the program in more detail. The company filled out a form with a brief description of the job, teacher background required, skills needed, and appointed a company mentor to serve as daily contact person. The company asked for one or two or three interns. In addition, the company was asked to consider hosting a one-day seminar session for all interns. This included a tour of the company and a brief presentation. It was necessary to stress that internships be true learning experiences, not inexpensive labor. The types of firms represented included: manufacturing, finance, public utilities, and health care.

The superintendents were shown the applications for interns before they gave them to secondary principals and guidance counsellors for distribution to math, science and computer teachers. One of the main concerns of the superintendents was that the teachers would apply for full-time employment after the work experience. Chief school administrators selected one of two options:

1. $1000 stipend
2. Six in-service credits and $500

Older teachers were attracted to the stipend while younger teachers preferred credits.

Applicants had to be full-time instructors at their schools. Teachers worked 240 hours, wrote a weekly progress report describing their daily assignments, any problems that required help and at least three detailed lesson plans. Upon completion of the summer internship, teachers wrote a synopsis of their experience and a description of how this information would be used in the classroom. Each superintendent or his designee nominated up to three candidates. Final selections were based on the application information and interviews conducted by the Educator Internship Committee. The application asked for subjects taught, areas of certification, endorsements of the superintendent and the building principal, a brief resume including past educational and work experience skills, career plans,

reasons for applying for this program, and expectations if accepted. The selection criteria included subjects taught and types of internships available. Nomination deadline was February 21, notification of applicants was April 1 and program dates were June 23 through August 1.

A project director was needed to lead the weekly seminar sessions, provide coordination between the intern and intern sites, prepare the summary, and assist where needed. Thirteen applicants applied for that position. The man chosen had worked in industry and was now a college instructor.

All teacher applicants were interviewed personally to match the job to the person. Twenty educators were to work at the thirteen Berks County business and industries. At least one person represented each school district in the county. The committee had the final say for all applicants.

Separate half-day orientation sessions were held for teachers and for mentors to explain their roles in the program. A social was held after school for interns to meet their mentors. They made an appointment to meet at the company site to develop a work plan.

The goals of the program were:

1. To have classroom teachers gain knowledge of occupations, job skills and abilities students need to prepare for the world of work.
2. To give teachers an awareness of the impact of technology on today's work place.
3. To "build bridges" between education and the private sector.
4. To encourage students to prepare appropriately for today's careers.
5. To improve scientific and technical educational curricula.
6. To have teachers share their newly gained knowledge with the district as a whole, and their students in particular.

Benefits gained by the teacher were:

1. Exposure to the real needs of business.
2. Knowledge of skills needed by students entering an apprentice program.
3. A better feel for what should be stressed in high school courses.
4. Knowledge of resources and materials that business and industry can provide.

Ninety-four percent of the educator interns said that they would be interested in participating in another internship. The general consensus of the interns was that this practical learning experience was more meaningful than taking a formal course. It also renewed teacher commitment. Teachers received numerous materials to aid in classroom teaching, as well as met many people to serve as guest speakers for the classroom. It taught some of the teachers how to extend the capabilities of software packages already used in the classroom to generate additional lessons for students. The experience touring the facilities led to better understanding of local vocational needs.

Benefits to participating companies were:

1. They gained input into the school curriculum.
2. It broadened their computer knowledge.
3. They obtained feedback from professional educators in relation to their training program.
4. They told educators what industry felt was important within the schools.

All companies will participate in the program next year.

I spent my six weeks working in the Human Resources Department of General Battery Corporation. My reasons for participating in the program were:

1. To obtain a knowledge of what pragmatic language skills are needed to prepare students for gainful employment since some of my students are language impaired.
2. To learn what type of modifications are needed for physically handicapped students so that they could use a computer at a job setting.

My duties were varied. I assisted during job interviews. I photographed and interviewed all employees with over ten years of service and published it in an in-house newspaper. This allowed me to learn the various jobs there that would present career opportunities for my students. I was in charge of the company picnic. This had no transference value to the classroom but it was fun to have an unlimited budget to shop for door prizes. Their computer system was very challenging to me and I designed a new job application software program. I worked with the training department to establish in-house programs. I was in charge of planning and teaching a one-day seminar for department heads on communication skills. How different to have a catered lunch at a presentation site with the latest in media technology at my disposal. I was able to acquaint them with the desireability of hiring our physically handicapped students.

My three lesson plans were:

1. To develop a list of vocabulary words and sentence structures needed on-the-job. I used these, not only to teach new words, but also to work on articulating the words to increase intelligibility. For one non-verbal student, I programmed the vocabulary into his electronic communication board.
2. To teach interviewing skills for job placement. Mrs. Skvarla, my mentor, visited the school in February and spoke to the students about resumes, equal employment opportunity legislation and interviewing skills. We plan to continue the partnership to provide a transition of handicapped young adults from school to the workplace. The ultimate goal would be for the host companies to employ our qualified physically handicapped-mentally alert students.
3. To modify peripherals such as keyboard adaptations for the physically handicapped students so that they could operate computers used in industry. I am waiting for funding to be approved for these purposes.

I felt that my educator internship program was very helpful to me and to my students.

In summary, I would like you to watch a slide show that has been prepared for you.